

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

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August 10, 2005

Letters to the Editor
Dallas Morning News
P.O. Box 655237
Dallas, Texas 75265

To the Editor:

Rep. Joe Barton mischaracterized my views in his op-ed ("How Bad is Global Warming?", July 31) about what I think is a misguided investigation targeted at three climate scientists.

First, no one is suggesting that anyone "butt out." And no one is suggesting that the right approach is "don't ask, don't listen." Congress has an obligation to understand the ongoing scientific work on climate change, and it has many possible ways of doing so, including holding open and balanced hearings or briefings and asking outside experts for guidance. That's something the Energy and Commerce Committee has failed to do.

But instead of trying to understand the science, the Committee has gone on the attack. It has made three scientists whose views they apparently don't like the target of a congressional investigation, and has asked them and their sponsors wide-ranging questions that have nothing to do with understanding their scientific conclusions.

The op-ed piece describes the letters sent to the scientists as a "normal exercise," but that is simply not the case. The kind of investigative letter and document request that the Energy and Commerce Committee issued is highly unusual in any situation and is entirely unprecedented in the case of a substantive dispute about scientific work. And the investigation is even more suspect as it is based on the work of two Canadians, one an assistant professor of economics and the other a retired mining executive, neither of whom are climate scientists and whose claims have been widely contradicted by respected experts. But has the Committee asked those Canadians questions about their work? No.

What this is all about is a threat to the open pursuit of science. Are scientists going to be investigated any time they reach a conclusion that troubles a politician? Does the "plant worker in Ennis" cited in the op-ed want his or her tax money going to fund ideology instead of objective science? I don't think so.

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Congress should be asking open, unbiased questions about science, not badgering scientists to steer them to a politically satisfying conclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sherwood Boehlert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

SHERWOOD BOEHLERT
Chairman